

14 California Zinfandels

New releases in a range of styles, from bold and ripe to supple and elegant

[Tim Fish](#)

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Tasting Highlights bring the best of the past week's tastings of California wines to WineSpectator.com members.

One of the true pleasures of Zinfandel is that it's made successfully in a variety of styles in regions throughout California. That's clearly evident in this week's tasting of recently rated wines.

These Zinfandels hail from prime Sonoma County regions such as Russian River, Dry Creek and Sonoma valleys, as well as Paso Robles in California's Central Coast.

Stylistically, the wines run the Zinfandel gamut: If you prefer a bold, ripe and jammy wine, consider the Rosenblum Maggie's Reserve 2009 or Mazzocco Pony Reserve 2009; for something more elegant, look for Small Wonders Paso Robles 2010 or Sebastiani Sonoma County 2009.

For those who prefer Zinfandel with richness, structure and focus, and a wine that will improve with a few years in the cellar, there are plenty of choices. Topping that list are Bedrock Sonoma Valley Old Vine 2010, Kokomo Winemaker's Reserve Pauline's Vineyard 2009, Williams Selyem Forchini Vineyard North Flats 2009 and, finally, Bucklin Old Hill Ranch 2008.

BEDROCK Zinfandel Sonoma Valley Old Vine 2010 Score: 92 / \$24

This dense, brooding red delivers licorice and Asian spice aromas, mixed with blackberry accents, and concentrated, layered flavors of huckleberry, dried sage and pepper. Best from 2013 through 2017. 750 cases made. —*T.F.*

KOKOMO Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Winemaker's Reserve Pauline's Vineyard 2009 Score: 92 / \$32

Expressive aromas of cracked pepper and black cherry lead to ripe and layered flavors of blackberry, licorice and sage. Tannins are big but ripe. Drink now through 2017. 200 cases made. —*T.F.*

WILLIAMS SELYEM Zinfandel Russian River Valley Forchini Vineyard North Flats 2009 Score: 92 / \$50

This dense, richly structured Zin exhibits black raspberry and spice aromas and layered, well-structured flavors of plum, Chinese spice and licorice, which linger toward ripe but firm tannins. Drink now through 2017. 189 cases made. —*T.F.*

WILSON Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Ken's Reserve 2009 Score: 91 / \$60

This ripe, zesty red displays black cherry and cracked pepper aromas, following through to rich, supple flavors of black raspberry, mocha and licorice. Drink now through 2017. 124 cases made. —*T.F.*

BRIAN BENSON The Wince Paso Robles 2008 Score: 90 / \$45

This zesty and appealingly burly red boasts blackberry cobbler and espresso aromas, leading to ripe, layered flavors of black cherry and spiced licorice. Zinfandel, Syrah and Mourvèdre. Drink now through 2016. 125 cases made. —*T.F.*

BUCKLIN Zinfandel Sonoma Valley Old Hill Ranch 2008 Score: 90 / \$34

Concentrated and appealingly rustic, this Zin features smoky cracked pepper and wild berry aromas and ripe, layered flavors of plum, sage and licorice. Drink now through 2017. 681 cases made. —*T.F.*

CARLISLE Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Gold Mine Ranch 2009 Score: 90 / \$37

A tightly focused Zin, with raspberry and white pepper aromas that follow through to layered, refined flavors of black cherry and anise. Finishes with ripe, yet minerally, tannins. Best from 2013 through 2017. 301 cases made. —*T.F.*

MAZZOCCO Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Pony Reserve 2009 Score: 90 / \$52

Ripe and zesty, with baked cherry and cracked pepper aromas leading to lively raspberry, cinnamon and sage flavors. Drink now through 2016. 220 cases made. —*T.F.*

ROSENBLUM Zinfandel Sonoma Valley Maggie's Reserve 2009 Score: 90 / \$45

Ripe and jammy, with an appealing rustic streak, offering raspberry and brown baking spice aromas as well as supple black cherry, underbrush and licorice flavors. Drink now through 2016. 1,200 cases made. —*T.F.*

KOKOMO Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley 2009 Score: 89 / \$26

Ripe and zesty, with lively black raspberry and cinnamon aromas, joined by baked cherry and spiced licorice flavors. Drink now through 2016. 1,050 cases made. —*T.F.*

ANCIENT PEAKS Zinfandel Paso Robles 2009 Score: 88 / \$17

Ripe and appealingly jammy, with cherry pie and spiced vanilla aromas following through to zesty flavors of raspberry, roasted sage and pepper. Drink now through 2017. 2,009 cases made. —*T.F.*

NOVY Zinfandel Russian River Valley 2010 Score: 88 / \$19

Zesty and loaded with spice, this features loamy raspberry aromas and layered flavors of boysenberry and mint, which linger toward firm tannins. Best from 2013 through 2017. 1,008 cases made. —*T.F.*

SMALL WONDERS Zinfandel Paso Robles 2010 Score: 87 / \$9

A zesty little Zin, with lively cherry and dill aromas leading to easygoing flavors of tart plum, cracked pepper and sage. Drink now. 1,232 cases made. —*T.F.*

SEBASTIANI Zinfandel Sonoma County 2009 Score: 86 / \$15

Appealing for its smoked pepper and black cherry aromas as well as modest plum and roasted anise flavors. Drink now through 2016. 11,500 cases made. —*T.F.*